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To: MICHAEL MCATEER
Subject: Peabody Coal Company, Lynnvile, Indiana

EPA Region 5 Records Ctr.



367128

Hello Michael--

Last week about 10 of IDEM staff conducted a sampling mission to the Peabody Coal site, in Lynnvile. Water and sediments were sampled. Total Metals, Filtered Metals, SVOCs, pH, sulfates sulfides were sampled. The sampling process went pretty well. GPS readings were taken at all locations. Hydrolab readings were taken at all water sample locations.

Rather surprising, the Hydrolab readings for pH ranged from 7.0 to 8.2, which is hardly indicative of acid conditions. Stream levels were abnormally low. The waste/gob pile was not discharging into Big Creek. Stagnant ponds of acid water on the gob pile were sampled, and Hydrolabed a pH of 2.08, and this stagnant water was a bright flourescent maroon color.

Big Creek itself appears to be pretty healthy. Abundant wildlife was observed in Big Creek for MOST of the 7 miles that were sampled. Snakes, a 14-16" snapping turtle, a 20" Grass Carp, a 20" Bowfin, as well as other fish were observed, so I am not at all sure that our sampling results are going to show much impact on Big Creek from the gob pile.

There was not as much wildlife observed in Big Creek on the section that was adjacent to the gob pile. There is a dam along here and the water below the dam is very shallow (and therefore perhaps not very conducive to a lot of wildlife), and the water above the dam is pretty deep and murky, so it may be that wildlife is present, but was not visible. The pH in this area was 7.0, but may be lower than that when the gob pile is discharging water into Big Creek just upstream from this section of stream.

While we were sampling, a farmer came up and reported that 2 years ago, there was a big fish kill on Big Creek.. He reported it to the game warden. (I am going to try to see if this was documented, and to get a copy of any report on this) Sounds like the dike around the gob pile may have broken and released acid water into the Creek (THIS IS NOT CONFIRMED)

Peabody is under the impression that if our sampling comes back indicating there is little or no impact from the gob pile on Big Creek, that the site will revert back to Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Office of Reclamation. I was not a party to the meeting between Peabody and IDEM, so am not sure about this. Of course, there is always the potential problem of another dike rupture, so perhaps that gives us some leverage.

I would like to Hydro-lab the stream again immediately downstream from the gob pile discharge point at a time when the gob pile is discharging. Ideally, I would like to set up an automatic system that would measure the amount of water that discharges from the gob pile, along with pH readings, something that would give us at least 4 readings a day for a several month period, to better determine exactly how much and what is being discharged. I am sure Peabody would resist a request for such a system. Then again, such a system might be superfluous if Peabody is willing to simply begin remediation/reclamation of the gob pile. They might be willing to do this, although they probably are thinking in terms of a typical IDNR project.

Sampling results will not be back for 30 days, plus some review time by our chemists. Jim Smith is still planning to conduct a ecological study of Big Creek. I will ask him to give special attention to the section of Big Creek immediately adjacent to the gob pile.

I will keep you updated. -----Ken Gill, IDEM Project Manger, State Cleanup Section.